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Editorial: Congress should fund Bay Area water recycling

MediaNews editorial

Posted: 03/31/2009 12:01:00 AM PDT

THERE ARE FEW issues on California's political landscape that spark more fractious debates than the politics of water. That is why it is especially gratifying to see officials throughout the Bay Area working in collaboration on the issue of recycled water.

Water recycling is a smart and effective way to protect our environment, maintain the integrity of existing municipal water supplies and efficiently use natural resources.

We should not flush wastewater into rivers, bays, estuaries and the ocean if it can be treated and used again for other purposes such as irrigating parks and golf courses.

That is the philosophy behind six Bay Area water recycling projects that were authorized by President George W. Bush last May. This authorization came about through the diligent and collaborative efforts of members of Congress from across the Bay Area.

Rather than fighting each other for federal money exclusively for their districts, the members worked together and have completed their task by obtaining federal money for recycled projects in Pittsburg, Antioch, Redwood City, Palo Alto and San Jose.

While the East Bay's Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez, has taken the lead on this project, he has had solid support from Reps. Anna Eshoo, D-Atherton, Ellen

Tauscher, D-Alamo, Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, Mike Honda, D-San Jose, Zoe Lofgren, D-San Jose, Pete Stark, D-Fremont, Jackie Speier, D-San Mateo, and Lynn Woolsey, D-Petaluma.

Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer have led the way in the Senate.

Now, three more agencies have come to understand the value of collaborative efforts. Central Contra Costa Sanitary District, Dublin San Ramon Services District and the city of Petaluma have all joined a coalition of agencies that believe in the recycled water concept.

The group seeks more federal authorization for six additional projects and they should get it. Those projects will involve Central Contra Costa Sanitary District, Dublin San Ramon Services District, Dublin Unified School District, the cities of Petaluma, Redwood City, Dublin, Concord, Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, East Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills, Menlo Park and Antioch as well as Stanford University and the Ironhorse Sanitary District.

Those projects, when completed, will develop more than 8,000 acre-feet of new, reliable water that will reduce the need to divert fresh water from the Delta.

We would urge the Congress to act quickly on these funding requests. Clearly, this is an important conservation measure that needs to proceed with all due speed.

More importantly, we applaud the Bay Area's congressional representatives for having a unified regional vision and for working with each other in making this important and innovative regional project become a reality.

This is the way government is supposed to work.

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